IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with <u>underlining</u> and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please AMEND claims in accordance with the following:

1.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An online shopping method, comprising:

previously generating/preparing article data in which features of an article picture and a data sending rank are related to each article picture as additional information;

upon receiving an article search by a user, ~~calculating similarity~~ <u>determining similarities</u> among a plurality of search resultant article pictures, and generating article picture arrangement data of all search resultant article pictures in which the more similar features of the search resultant article pictures are to each other, the more closely the search resultant article pictures are disposed on a two-dimensional plane;

sending the article picture arrangement data to a user terminal, said article picture arrangement data indicating ~~arrangement~~ <u>display</u> positions of said search resultant article pictures on a screen of the user terminal<u>,</u> and <u>said display positions</u> being independent of the data sending rank ~~defining~~ <u>which defines</u> an order in which said search resultant article pictures are to be sent;

sending the search resultant article pictures in accordance with <u>said order of</u> the data sending rank <u>which is</u> defined prior to said article search; and

displaying each of the search resultant article picture at each ~~arrangement~~ <u>display</u> position in accordance with the article picture arrangement data on the screen of the user terminal as initial search results in a receiving order, thereby displaying an article picture with a higher data sending rank earlier at the ~~arrangement~~ <u>display</u> position.

2.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) An online shopping method according to claim 1, wherein the article picture arrangement data is generated in accordance with a combination of a similarity of a feature of each resultant article picture and at least any one selected from the group consisting of a keyword representing the feature of the article, and article classification information regarding classification of the article.

3.   (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 2, wherein the data sending rank is determined by an article provider.

4.   (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 2, wherein a service user previously selects items to be considered in purchasing an article and notifies a service provider of the selection, and

the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance with the notified items.

5.   (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 2, wherein a service provider previously analyzes items considered by a service user based on a past search history and a past purchase history of the service user, and

the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance with the analyzed items.

6.   (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 2, wherein a screen of article search results is presented to an article provider, and the article provider specifies a picture of an article which the article provider provides on the presented screen of article search results, thereby making it possible to access selling information of the article.

7.   (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 1, wherein the data sending rank is determined by an article provider.

8.   (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 1, wherein a service user previously selects items to be considered in purchasing an article and notifies a service provider of the selection, and

the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance with the notified items.

9.   (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 1, wherein a service provider previously analyzes items considered by a service user based on a past search history and a past purchase history of the service user, and

the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance with the analyzed items.

10.   (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 1, wherein a screen of article search results is presented to an article provider, and the article provider specifies a picture of an article which the article provider provides on the presented screen of article search results, thereby making it possible to access selling information of the article.

11-16. (CANCELLED)

17.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An online shopping system for a user to search for and purchase an intended article from a number of articles,
        a service providing system comprising:
        an article data generating part which previously generates/prepares article data in which features of an article picture and a data sending rank are related to each article picture as additional information;
        an article database for storing the article data;
        a search processing part which searches the article database upon receiving an article search from a user;
        an article picture arrangement data generating part which receives search results of the search processing part, ~~calculates similarity~~ determines similarities among a plurality of search resultant article pictures, and generates article picture arrangement data of all search resultant article pictures in which the more similar features of the search resultant article pictures are to each other, the more closely the search resultant article pictures are disposed on a two-dimensional plane, said article picture arrangement data indicating ~~arrangement~~ display positions of said search resultant article pictures on a screen of a user terminal and said display positions being independent of the data sending rank defining an order in which said search resultant article pictures are to be sent; and
        a data sending control part ~~which sends~~ sending the article picture arrangement data to the user terminal and sending the search resultant article pictures in accordance with said order of the data sending rank ~~information~~ which is defined prior to said article search, and
        wherein said user terminal includes a display control part which displays each of the search resultant article picture at each ~~arrangement~~ display position in accordance with the article arrangement data on the screen of the user terminal as initial search results in a receiving order, and
        an article picture with a higher data sending rank is displayed earlier at ~~an arrangement~~ a

display position at the user terminal.

18.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) An online shopping system according to claim 17, wherein the features of the article are any one selected from the group consisting of features of an article picture of the article, a keyword representing the features of the article, and article classification information regarding classification of the article in accordance with the features thereof, or a combination thereof.

19.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A program stored in a recording medium for use by a computer based online shopping system to enable a user to search for and purchase an intended article from a number of articles, the program executing operations comprising:

previously generating/preparing article data in which features of an article picture and a data sending rank are related to each article picture as additional information;

upon receiving an article search by a user, ~~calculating similarity~~ determining similarities among a plurality of search resultant article pictures, and generating article picture arrangement data of all search resultant article pictures in which the more similar features of the search resultant article pictures are to each other, the more closely the search resultant article pictures are disposed on a two-dimensional plane, said article picture arrangement data indicating ~~arrangement~~ display positions of said search resultant article pictures on a screen of a user terminal and said display positions being independent of the data sending rank defining an order in which said search resultant article pictures are to be sent;

sending the article picture arrangement data to the user terminal;

sending the search resultant pictures in accordance with said order of the data sending rank which is defined prior to said article search; and

displaying each of the search resultant article picture at each ~~arrangement~~ display position in accordance with the article picture arrangement data on the screen of the user terminal as initial search results in a receiving order, thereby displaying an article picture with a higher data sending rank earlier at the ~~arrangement~~ display position.

20.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The program according to claim 19, wherein the features of the article are any one selected from the group consisting of features of an article picture of the article, a keyword representing the features of the article, and article classification information regarding classification of the article in accordance with the features thereof, or a combination thereof.

21.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An online shopping method, comprising:

assigning a data sending rank relating at least one feature of an article picture to at least one feature of other pictures of articles and generating article picture arrangement data of all search resultant article pictures in which search resultant article pictures of articles with features similar to each other are disposed at close positions on a two-dimensional plane, said data sending rank defining an order in which said search resultant article pictures are to be sent and said order being independent of the article picture arrangement data indicating ~~arrangement~~ display positions of said search resultant article pictures on a screen of a terminal; and

successively displaying each search resultant article picture as initial search results responsive to an article search request from a user based on the article picture arrangement data upon transmission in accordance with the data sending rank which is defined prior to said article search, and

wherein ~~similarity~~ similarities among search resultant article pictures is ~~calculated~~determined, a search resultant article picture with a higher data sending rank is displayed earlier than a search resultant article picture with a lower data sending rank and the search resultant article pictures similar to each other are disposed in closest proximity to each other compared to other search resultant article pictures.

22.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An online shopping method, comprising:

receiving an article search request from a user and ranking article images responsive to the article search request based on ~~similarity~~ similarities of features of the article images, said ranking including ~~calculating similarity~~ determining similarities among search resultant article images;

transmitting the search resultant article images in an order defined prior to said search request that is independent of said ranking indicating ~~arrangement~~ display positions of said search resultant article images on a screen; and

displaying the search resultant article images as initial article search results on a two-dimensional plane in accordance with the ranking so that search resultant article images corresponding to articles with similar features are positioned to be in adjacent positions among the displayed search resultant article images.

23.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An online shopping method, comprising:

sorting search resultant images of articles retrieved in response to an article search

request from a user by ~~calculating similarity~~ determining similarities among the search resultant images and positioning search resultant images corresponding to articles having similar features in close proximity, said sorting indicating ~~arrangement~~ display positions of said search resultant images on a display screen; and

providing the sorted images of the search resultant articles to the user as an initial search result on a two-dimensional plane, where the articles having similar features are displayed as a unified group based on said sorting and transmitted based on a rank defined prior to said search request which indicates an order in which said search resultant images are to be sent independent of said sorting.

24.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An online shopping method, comprising:

assigning display positions to article images responsive to a search request by ~~calculating similarity~~ determining similarities of articles shown in said article images and based on inputs of the providers, said display positions being indicative of an order for displaying said article images; and

displaying the article images as an initial result of the search request in accordance with said display positions assigned, where articles having similar features are positioned in adjacent positions and said display positions are independent of a sending order of the article images defined prior to said search request and indicating a rank in which said article images are to be sent.

25.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An online shopping method, comprising:

sorting pictures of articles matching a search request prior to providing a result in response to the search request, said sorting being indicative of ~~arrangement positions~~ a first order for displaying said pictures on a screen by ~~calculating similarity~~ determining similarities among pictures matching said search request; and

transmitting said pictures according to a ~~rank~~ second order defined prior to said search request ~~which indicates an order in~~ indicating a sequence in which said pictures are to be sent regardless of said ~~arrangement positions~~ first order and displaying said pictures based on said sorting as the result during an online shopping session, where said pictures are displayed so that pictures of articles having similar features are positioned adjacent to each other.